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# Many Americans think Valentine's Day is romantic and fun not outdated or stressful: AP-NORC poll

By **LEANNE ITALIE** and **LIN-LEY SANDERS**

**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — While some U.S. adults consider Cupid's holiday outdated, more say they love the romance and fun of Valentine's Day, and many expect to spend quality time with partners, friends and family.

A new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows that about three-quarters of Americans plan to celebrate Friday's holiday in some way this year. More than half will be with a romantic partner, and about 4 in 10 will be with family. About 2 in 10 will celebrate with friends, and 15% say they'll mark the occasion in some other way.

Roughly one-quarter of Americans will not celebrate at all. People in a relationship are much more likely than those not in a relationship to say they'll celebrate Valentine's Day in some way.

Joseph Brubaker, a 38-year-old high school teacher from Raeford, North Carolina, sees ups and downs to Valentine's Day. He plans



Valentine's Day balloons are displayed at a grocery store in Glenview, Ill., Monday, Feb. 10, 2025.

**Associated Press**

to fly to Ohio to spend it with his new girlfriend. They've been dating long distance for about two months.

"Typically it's a greeting card holiday," he said. "But the celebration of the emotional connection is great. That's necessary for those in relationships. The corporations are so entrenched in it, though, and make you pay \$60 for flowers that usu-

ally cost a lot less."

At 74, retired science teacher Ian Ellis of Louisville, Kentucky, has never been married. Valentine's Day, in the traditional sense, doesn't do much for him. He plans to get together with a friend after the holiday, enjoying the Sunday buffet at a nearby restaurant.

"I'm pretty low profile as far

as Valentine's Day goes. I won't be sending any card," he said.

Many Americans see Valentine's Day as a romantic and fun occasion. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults say "romantic" describes Valentine's Day "extremely" or "very" well, while about one-third say that about "fun."

Count 67-year-old William Betts of Oklahoma City in

the romantic category. Married 40 years, he joked: "I'm actually the romantic one in the family. If I didn't do anything, she probably wouldn't notice."

This year, he'll be traveling 300 miles round trip to distribute meals for the food pantry he runs as a volunteer. He plans to make dinner for his wife and pick up some flowers at some point. But he acknowledges that not everyone is a fan of the holiday.

"I know it's a tough day for some. It's tough for my daughter, who's single," he said.

About 2 in 10 U.S. adults say "outdated" describes the holiday extremely or very well, while about 3 in 10 say it describes Valentine's Day "somewhat" well. Fewer around 1 in 10 Americans say "stressful" is an extremely or very good descriptor, and about 3 in 10 say it's "somewhat" good. Janis Thompson, 76, in Durham, North Carolina, is divorced. That hasn't spoiled her Valentine's Day vibe.

"I always feel good about Valentine's Day," she said. "The more love in the world, the better it is." □

# Trump wants denuclearization talks with Russia and China, hopes for defense spending cuts

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **MICHELLE L. PRICE**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Donald Trump said Thursday that he wants to restart nuclear arms control talks with Russia and China and that eventually he hopes all three countries could agree to cut their massive defense budgets in half.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump lamented the hundreds of billions of dollars being invested in rebuilding the nation's nuclear deterrent and said he hopes to gain commitments from the U.S. adversaries to cut their own spending.

"There's no reason for us

to be building brand new nuclear weapons, we already have so many," Trump said. "You could destroy the world 50 times

over, 100 times over. And here we are building new nuclear weapons, and they're building nuclear weapons."



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters after signing an executive order in the Oval Office of the White House, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025, in Washington.

**Associated Press**

"We're all spending a lot of money that we could be spending on other things that are actually, hopefully much more productive," Trump said.

While the U.S. and Russia hold massive stockpiles of weapons since the Cold War, Trump predicted that China would catch up in their capability to exact nuclear devastation "within five or six years."

He said if the weapons were ever called to use, "that's going to be probably oblivion."

Trump said he would look to engage in nuclear talks with the two countries once "we straighten it all out" in the Middle East and Ukraine.

"One of the first meetings I want to have is with President Xi of China, President Putin of Russia. And I want to say, 'let's cut our military budget in half.' And we can do that. And I think we'll be able to."

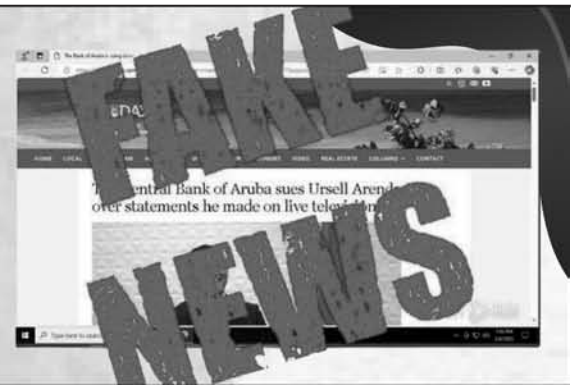
Trump in his first term tried and failed to bring China into nuclear arms reduction talks when the U.S. and Russia were negotiating an extension of a pact known as New START. Russia suspended its participation in the treaty during the Biden administration, as the U.S. and Russia continued on massive programs to extend the life-spans or replace their Cold War-era nuclear arsenals. □



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## Vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is sworn in as Trump's health chief after a close Senate vote

By AMANDA SEITZ  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was sworn in Thursday as President Donald Trump's health secretary after a close Senate vote, putting the prominent vaccine skeptic in control of \$1.7 trillion in federal spending, vaccine recommendations and food safety as well as health insurance programs for roughly half the country.

Nearly all Republicans fell in line behind Trump despite hesitancy over Kennedy's views on vaccines, voting 52-48 to elevate the scion of one of America's most storied political and Democratic families to secretary of the Health and Human Services Department. Democrats unanimously opposed Kennedy.

Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell, who had polio as a child, was the only "no" vote among Republicans,



Supreme Court Associate Justice Neil Gorsuch swears in Robert F. Kennedy Jr., as Health and Human Services Secretary in the Oval Office at the White House, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2025, in Washington.

mirroring his stands against Trump's picks for the Pentagon chief and director of national intelligence.

"I'm a survivor of childhood polio. In my lifetime, I've watched vaccines save millions of lives from devastating diseases across

America and around the world," McConnell said in a statement afterward. "I will not condone the re-litigation of proven cures,

and neither will millions of Americans who credit their survival and quality of life to scientific miracles."

The rest of the GOP, however, has embraced Kennedy's vision with a directive for the nation's public health agencies to focus on chronic diseases such as obesity.

"We've got to get into the business of making America healthy again," said Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, adding that Kennedy will bring a "fresh perspective" to the office.

Kennedy joined by his wife, other family members and several members of Congress was sworn in Thursday afternoon in the Oval Office by Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch, hours after confirmation.

He said he'd first been there in 1961, and told stories of seeing his uncle, President John F. Kennedy, there as a child. □

Associated Press

## Federal health agencies restore webpages and datasets following judge's order

By MIKE STOBBE and KASTURI PANANJADY  
Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Federal health agencies have restored several webpages and datasets, following a judge's order to bring back public access to information that had been removed to comply with a presidential executive order.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday night restored nine webpages and datasets, including pages on adolescent health, information on HIV monitoring

and testing, contraception guidance, and data

on how pollution, poverty and other factors impact

certain communities.

The Food and Drug Administration restored recommendations for increasing enrollment of females in clinical trials, analyzing and interpreting sex-specific data and including sex-specific information in regulatory submissions of medical products.

On Jan. 20, his first day back in the White House, President Donald Trump signed an order for agencies to use the term "sex" and not "gender" in federal policies and documents. In response, the Office of Personnel Man-

agement's acting director required agency heads to eliminate any programs and take down any websites that promote "gender ideology." That led to widespread takedowns across government websites. Some information gradually was put back up, at least in part. But public health experts raised alarms about things that remained missing. Doctors for America, represented by the Public Citizen Litigation Group, sued OPM, the CDC, the FDA and the Department of Health and Human Services. □



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is shown Sunday, March 15, 2020, in Atlanta.

Associated Press



# Why people are naming bugs, rats and cats after their exes this Valentine's Day

By MARK THIESSEN

Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)

— Feel like dissing instead of kissing your former lover this Valentine's Day? Think your ex is more like a rat than a prince? Do you believe your former paramour should never procreate?

Animal shelters and zoos around the country are encouraging little cathartic avenues for revenge this holiday and raising money for a cause — with a slew of darkly funny fundraisers for those missed by Cupid's arrow.

Options include naming a feral cat after your old flame before it's neutered or giving rodents or cockroaches your love bug's name before feeding them to bigger animals. The Minnesota Zoo's campaign to name a bug after either a friend or a foe has attracted donors from across the world.

Teri Scott of Poulsbo, Washington, said she was bombarded on social media



A snowy owl named Ghost eats a frozen rat at the Bird Treatment and Learning Center on Feb. 6, 2025, in Anchorage, Alaska.

Associated Press

with the anti-love campaigns, including naming a hissing cockroach after an ex.

She said she couldn't bring herself to name a bug that's so hard to get rid of

after her former husband, fearing that it could be an omen she'd never shake him despite the court costs she paid.

Then she ran across a promotion for the "Love Hurts"

fundraiser at the Bird Treatment and Learning Center in Anchorage, Alaska. She ponied up \$100 to name a frozen dead rat after her ex, and it will now be fed to a resident raptor at the fa-

cility. Scott, who is celebrating her first anniversary as a newly single woman, views the donation as a gift to herself.

"You never enter a relationship thinking it's going to end, but when it does it's just hurtful," she said. "I just thought, I need to do something a little bit special for myself."

She laughed out loud when she saw the "Love Hurts" posting. "It just seemed like a beautiful way to give back," she said.

"We do this in good fun," said Laura Atwood, the center's executive director. The money raised helps the facility pay salaries and care for birds the nonprofit rehabilitated 580 of them last year. Just over \$18,000 had been raised by the time the campaign closed Wednesday. So many rats more than 130 were purchased for the campaign, the center ran out of supplies until another batch of frozen rodents arrived Wednesday. □

## Lawyers for inmates ask judge to take over health care services in Arizona prisons

By JACQUES BILLEAUD

Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP)

— Lawyers for 25,000 people incarcerated in Arizona have asked a judge to take over health care operations in state-run prisons and appoint an official to run them, saying the state is not capable of

fixing deep failures in care even though it has been required to do so over the last decade.

In a filing Tuesday, the attorneys said a takeover is urgently needed because the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry lacks the

leadership to comply with changes ordered by a judge in a 2012 lawsuit over the quality of medical and mental health care for prisoners.

The first constitutional violation in the case was found in 2015, they said, and "A decade later, defendants still have not demonstrated the will, knowledge, or capacity to reform their prison healthcare system."

Arizona settled the case in 2014 but for years was dogged by complaints that it failed to follow through on its promises. The court slapped the state with contempt fines of \$1.4 million in 2018 and \$1.1 million in 2021. The settlement was eventually thrown out due to Arizona's noncompliance, and a trial was ordered.

In a blistering 2022 verdict, U.S. District Court Judge

Roslyn Silver ruled that the state was violating prisoners' constitutional rights by providing them with inadequate care, knew about the problem for years and refused to correct it.

She also said prison health care deficiencies resulted in preventable deaths and issued an injunction requiring corrections authorities to fix the constitutional violations.

In September 2019 lawyers representing the prisoners made a similar request for a takeover, also known as a receivership. Though Silver has previously shied away from granting that, she later said she would revive that possibility if the state acts in bad faith or fails to comply with the court-ordered changes.

Lawyers for prisoners pointed to a recent report from a court-appointed expert

who said health care for prisoners "remains poor, has shown little improvement since the start of the Injunction, and continues to place the residents at significant risk of serious harm, including death."

The corrections department and Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs' office did not immediately respond to messages seeking comment on the request. Past receiverships have been ordered for prisons in other states. In California in 2005, a federal judge seized control of the prison medical system after finding that an average of one inmate a week was dying of medical neglect or malpractice.

The Arizona lawsuit does not cover the nearly 10,000 people incarcerated in private prisons for state convictions. □



Arizona Prison Complex-Lewis inmates walk around the recreation yard Friday, Jan. 14, 2005, in Buckeye, Ariz.

Associated Press



## A driver plows into a demonstration in Munich, injuring 30 people

By GEIR MOULSON  
Associated Press

**BERLIN (AP)** — A driver drove a car into a labor union demonstration in central Munich on Thursday, injuring 30 people including children, authorities said. Officials said it was believed to be an attack.

The suspect, an Afghan asylum-seeker, was arrested. The incident follows a series of attacks involving immigrants in recent months that have pushed migration to the forefront of the campaign for Germany's Feb. 23 election.

Participants in a demonstration by the service workers' union ver.di were walking along a street at about 10:30 a.m. when the suspect's Mini Cooper overtook a police vehicle following the gathering, accelerated and plowed into the back of the group, police said.

Officers arrested the suspect after firing a shot at the car, deputy police chief Christian Huber said. Some of the victims sustained serious injuries.

The car, with a battered front and a shattered windshield, was lifted onto a tow truck late Thursday af-



Emergency services attend the scene of an accident after a driver hit a group of people in Munich, Germany, Thursday Feb. 13, 2025.

ternoon after investigators inspected it among debris including shoes.

The suspect was a 24-year-old Afghan asylum-seeker, police said. Bavaria's state interior minister, Joachim Herrmann, said officials believe the protest was likely targeted at random.

The state's justice minister, Georg Eisenreich, said a prosecutors' department that investigates extremism and terror was looking into

the case.

Police said the man, who they added lived in Munich and had a valid residence permit, was known to authorities from investigations in which he had been a witness because of a former job as a store detective.

"We feel with the victims, we are praying for the victims we hope very much that they all make it," Bavarian governor Markus Söder told reporters at the

scene.

"It is suspected to be an attack a lot points to that," Söder added.

Mayor Dieter Reiter said that children were among those injured.

A string of recent attacks The Munich incident comes three weeks after a 2-year-old boy and a man were killed in a knife attack in Aschaffenburg, also in Bavaria. An Afghan whose asylum application was reject-

ed was the suspect in that attack, which propelled migration to the center of the German election campaign.

The Aschaffenburg attack followed knife attacks in Mannheim and Solingen last year in which the suspects were immigrants from Afghanistan and Syria, respectively in the latter case, also a rejected asylum-seeker who was supposed to have left the country.

In the December Christmas market car ramming in Magdeburg, the suspect was a Saudi doctor who previously had come to various regional authorities' attention.

Demands for political consequences

Germany's main opposition conservative bloc, in which Söder is a prominent figure, has demanded a tougher approach to irregular migration, calling for many more people to be turned back at the border and for an increase in deportations. Curbing migration is also a core issue for the far-right Alternative for Germany, which polls put in second place behind the conservatives. □

Associated Press

## Top diplomats of Britain and China hold talks as part of efforts to rebuild ties

**LONDON (AP)** — The foreign ministers of Britain and China held talks in London on Thursday, reviving a formal dialogue between the two countries after almost seven years.

U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy said "robust and constructive" discussions with Foreign Minister Wang Yi would include economic relations and issues where the U.K. and China "do not always see eye to eye."

The meeting came as the U.K.'s center-left Labour Party government cautiously tries to reset ties with Beijing. Relations turned frosty in recent years over spying allegations, human rights concerns, China's support for Russia in the

Ukraine war and a crack-down on civil liberties in Hong Kong, a former British colony.

Wang also met U.K. National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell, and Prime Minister Keir Starmer briefly dropped in on a meeting a sign of its significance to the British side.

Starmer's office said the prime minister "underlined his intention to build a consistent and respectful relationship between the U.K. and China," but also "reiterated that the U.K. will always engage frankly" an indication that he raised human rights concerns.

Lammy, Britain's top diplomat, visited China in October, and Treasury chief Rachel Reeves travelled

to Beijing in January to reopen economic and financial talks with the Asian superpower, which the U.K. sees as major source of potential investment.

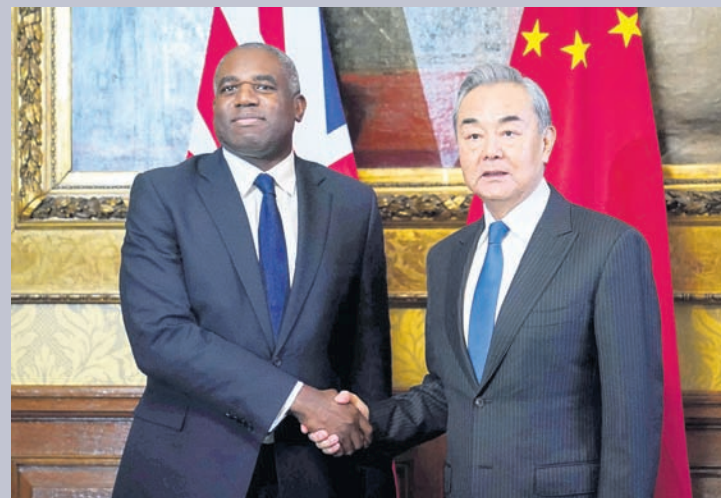
Thursday's discussions were part of the U.K.-China Strategic Dialogue, last held in 2018. Lammy said at the start of the meeting that discussions would include "areas of bilateral economic cooperation," as well as security issues such as the war in Ukraine. "We will also discuss issues where the U.K. and China do not always see eye to eye, and in some cases, the U.K. does have significant concerns," Lammy said.

Lammy added that "it is important that we use

channels such as this for robust but constructive discussion, as we are both members of the U.N. Security Council and we'll be better able to understand

each other, and each other's perspectives."

Wang said cooperation between nations was increasingly urgent in an ever-more-volatile world. □



Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy, left, welcomes Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi ahead of a meeting at 1 Carlton Gardens in London, Thursday Feb. 13, 2025.

Associated Press



# Rescued from virtual slavery in Myanmar's online scam centers, 260 foreigners are being repatriated

By JINTAMAS SAKSORN-CHAI

Associated Press

**BANGKOK (AP)** — Some 260 people believed to have been trafficked and trapped into working in online scam centers are to be repatriated after they were rescued from Myanmar, Thailand's army announced Thursday.

In a fresh crackdown on scam centers operating from Southeast Asia, the Thai army announced Thursday it is coordinating an effort to repatriate some 260 people believed to have been victims of human trafficking after they were rescued and sent from Myanmar to Thailand. Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, which share borders with Thailand, have become known as havens for criminal syndicates who are estimated to have forced hundreds of thousands of people in Southeast Asia and elsewhere into helping run online scams including false romantic ploys, bogus investment pitches and illegal gambling schemes. Such scams have extracted tens of billions of dol-



In this photo released by Royal Thai Army, more than 250 people from 20 nations who were reportedly rescued from alleged scam centers in Myanmar, as they crossed into Thailand's Tak province on Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025.

lars from victims around the world, according to U.N. experts, while the people recruited to carry them out have often been tricked into taking the jobs under false pretenses and trapped in virtual slavery. An earlier crackdown on scam centers in Myanmar was initiated in late 2023

after China expressed embarrassment and concern over illegal casinos and scam operations in Myanmar's northern Shan state along its border. Ethnic guerrilla groups with close ties to Beijing shut down many operations, and an estimated 45,000 Chinese nationals suspected of in-

volvement were repatriated.

The army said that those rescued in the most recent operation came from 20 nationalities with significant numbers from Ethiopia, Kenya, the Philippines, Malaysia, Pakistan and China. There were also nationals of Indonesia, Nepal, Tai-

wan, Uganda, Laos, Brazil, Burundi, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Ghana and India. They were sent across the border from Myanmar's Myawaddy district to Thailand's Tak province on Wednesday.

Reports in Thai media said a Myanmar ethnic militia that controls the area where they were held, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, was responsible for freeing the workers and taking them to the border. Myanmar's military government exercises little control over frontier areas where ethnic minorities predominate.

Several ethnic militias are believed to be involved in criminal activities, including drug trafficking and protecting call-center scam operations.

The Thai army statement said the rescued people will undergo questioning, and if determined to be victims of human trafficking, will enter a process of protection while waiting to be sent back to their countries. □

Associated Press

## UNICEF accuses armed men in eastern Congo of raping scores of children

By MARK BANCHEREAU

Associated Press

**DAKAR, Senegal (AP)** — The U.N. children's fund on Thursday accused armed men, likely on both sides of the conflict in eastern Con-

go, of raping scores of children over the past weeks as rebels expand their footprint and push government forces out.

The accusation came as the conflict in the mineral-

rich region shows no signs of abating. UNICEF cited reports of the abuses, saying the offenders were apparently from among both the M23 rebels and the government forces fighting them.

"In the North and South Kivu provinces, we are receiving horrific reports of grave violations against children by parties to the conflict, including rape and other forms of sexual violence at levels surpassing anything we have seen in recent years," UNICEF's Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement.

"One mother recounted to our staff how her six daughters, the youngest just 12 years old, were systematically raped by armed men while searching for food,"

Russell added.

Health facilities in the restive region reported during the week from Jan. 27 to Feb. 2 a total of 572 rape cases more than a five-fold increase compared to the week before, Lianne Gutcher, UNICEF's communication chief in Congo, told The Associated Press. Of those, 170 of those treated were children, she added.

Armed men perpetrated the rapes but it was unclear what specific armed group or army they belonged to, Gutcher said.

"It is suspected that all parties to the conflict committed sexual violence," she added.

The Rwanda-backed M23 rebels are the most prominent among more than

100 armed groups vying for control of Congo's mineral-rich east in a decades-long conflict that has created one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. In late January, the rebels captured Goma, the region's largest city, in a major escalation of the fighting.

Last week, the United Nations Human Rights Council launched a commission that will investigate atrocities, including rapes and killings akin to "summary executions" committed by both the Congolese army and the M23 rebels in the region since the beginning of the year.

On Monday, 84 Congolese soldiers accused of murder, rape and other crimes in the country's east went on trial in the city of Bukavu. □



M23 rebels escort government soldiers and police who surrendered to an undisclosed location in Goma, Democratic republic of the Congo, Jan. 30, 2025.

Associated Press



# Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions.

## Iguanas

Iguanas are easy to spot, as they are larger than most other lizards and when young, have a bright green color that makes them stand out.

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green displayed by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

Yuwana is a protected species, as it is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that international trade is regulated through the



CITES permit system. In the past, Arubans used to eat a popular Yuwana soup, as it was believed to give strength and help restore health – probably due to the protein boost it delivered. However, it is now illegal to catch, kill, buy or sell Yuwanas in Aruba, and this includes eating them!

## Turnip-tailed gecko

The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing.

The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae, which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like

structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surroundings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as long as you are VERY gentle. Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4-5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pega



Phyllodactylus Julieni is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them!

## Blue Kododo

These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, Cnemidophorus arubensis, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Kododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

## Striped anole

The striped anole (Anolis

lineatus) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Waltaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactyloidae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow. Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay.

Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.







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## Visit the island's hidden natural pools

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there are an additional two “hidden” natural pools that are situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary.

### Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known “Cura di Turtuga (Turtle’s Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you’re up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to



enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you’ve completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from

the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you even-

tually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It’s also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

### Cave Pool

This relatively new pool appeared just a few years ago, when a part of the dried up coral floor broke off and created a partition between the ocean and what is now the natural

pool that is hidden there. Because it’s still so new, there is no official name for it, but most people just call it the cave pool.

Just like the Conchi, the new natural pool is situated on the northern coast of Aruba. However, this pool is much easier to reach with any type of vehicle, and there is no hiking needed. This spot has also become a regular stop for touring visitors.

When you get there, maybe you won’t be able to spot the pool immediately, because you will probably notice the moon-shaped lagoon where wild northern waves crash into each other. Sounds scary, but if you look down on your right, you’ll see a calm, crystal blue little pool in the corner. To get there, you have to climb down some stairs. Be careful when climbing down and follow the instructions of your tour guide if you have one.

And just like Conchi, this pool also has a jumping spot, and a rope to climb back up the boulder.

Picture of cave pool is credited to RockaBeach Tours



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## In celebrating 200 years of Oranjestad... Learn about the history of the famous town hall!

(Oranjestad)—If you've ever taken a stroll through main street Oranjestad, you may have stumbled upon a big green house with beautiful colonial design. This legendary house, now used as a town hall for civil marriages, was once owned by a wealthy doctor and formed part of the elite neighborhood in Oranjestad.

Jacobo Eloy Arends was an Aruban physician, and in lived in Oranjestad during the 1920s. In 1922, he married Maria Monica Lacle, the daughter of well-known business man at the time, Adriaan Lacle. The two lived a posh life in the city center, and their mansion—once the center for neighborhood parties—now serves as a public town hall for civil marriages and is a cultural monument on the island.

The house was designed by architect Chibi Wever, and constructed under the leadership of famous master carpenter, Dada Picus, who was famous at the time for his construction of



beautiful buildings.

The construction of the house started once Jacobo and Maria got engaged. It is said that during the time of construction, Maria was not allowed to see the building nor be anywhere near the construction site. It wasn't until after her honeymoon that she saw the completed mansion for the

first time, furnished entirely by her sisters-in-law.

The mansion also contained the doctor's office, as well as a pharmacy. After the death of Jacobo, the house was inherited by his son, an Aruban dentist, who converted Jacobo's office into his own dental practice. Over the years, the house was rented and used by third parties, but eventually fell into disrepair, as the maintenance cost became too high to cover.

The land was sold to Land Aruba in 1986, but it did not see a renovation until 1997. Nowadays, it serves to host weddings, and is attached to a modern building situated behind—the Aruban census office.



Jacobo and Maria's mansion was situated in front of another famous mansion, owned by Jacobo's brother Frederico Maximilian (Machi) Arends. Frederico was married to Veneranda (whom the mansion was named after). Their house was also constructed by Dada Picus, utilizing Veneranda's design vision that was inspired by a house she saw in Cartagena, Colombia.

Nowadays, this mansion lies in ruins. However, the Aru-



ban government recently announced its official restoration, with plans to convert this monument into a governmental office and public space for visitors of Oranjestad.

Source and pictures credited to: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.





# Aruba's underwater wonderland

**ORANJESTAD** - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba.

The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef.

The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

## Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue



ocean.

While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star.

This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

## Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port.

When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its port-side in Malmok bay, and the sunken word war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat.

The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

## Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of



the island.

ing.

On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature.

The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relax-

## Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view.

Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven.





## Keeping up with the conniving spider...

### Nanzi fools Cha Tiger

Many years ago, Cha\* Tiger did not live in the mondi\*, but among civil society. Back then, he was feared by everyone. When he walked past in a halfway, everyone around would make room immediately, that's how ferocious he was.

One night a group of friends was hanging out and they were talking about Cha Tiger. "You know, that tiger sure is incredibly strong and I don't trust him one bit. He probably eats a lot too. Oh, I'm so scared of him!" one person said.

"Oh, don't be stupid! What can Cha Tiger do? He's all bark and no bite, that's it. I certainly am not afraid of him. I bet you guys that I could even sit on his back like I would any donkey." It was Nanzi who said this. The people around him laughed at his remarks, thinking how silly it was for him to say such things.

"You, Nanzi? You are such a liar! He'll stomp you into next Tuesday, stop saying such nonsense."

"I'm not lying!" Nanzi defended himself. "He'll take me all the way to Shon Arei\*."

The next morning, Shon Arei already knew of what Nanzi had been saying about Cha Tiger. He was really curious to see if Nanzi was brave enough to put his money where his mouth is. Cha Tiger walked past.

"Hey, Cha Tiger!" someone called to him. He growled at the person. "Hey, Cha Tiger! Listen!"

"Nanzi made fun of you, said he wasn't afraid of you at all! Said he could sit on your back and that you weren't as strong as we think you are."

Cha Tiger stopped dead in his tracks, furious. "Well, I'll set him straight!" Cha Tiger ran toward Nanzi's house, prepared to teach Nanzi a painful lesson. The entire way there he was growling and yelling, making everyone around aware what was going to happen. They all ran inside and peaked through the blinds to see



the fight that was going to unfold.

Nanzi also heard Cha Tiger's screams, slowly getting closer and closer. He was terrified. His face turned pale, and his teeth started chattering like someone with a high fever. Sweat was dripping down his forehead.

When Cha Tiger arrived at Nanzi's place, he stormed in and saw Nanzi's frail body lying face down in the corner. "Hey, how are you, Cha Tiger?" Nanzi asked, his voice trembling. "I Heard you were making fun of me in front of your little friends, so I came to hear from your own mouth what you have to say to me," Cha Tiger retorted, still fuming.

"Me? Talk bad about you?" Nanzi chuckled nervously. "People are such liars, I swear. Can't you see how sick I am here?" Nanzi took a pause, like someone who couldn't breathe properly. In his case of course,

it was probably from extreme fear. "Shi Maria\* wanted to take me to Shon Arei, where someone can heal me from my illness." Still wrapped up in his act, Nanzi turned back face down. "Me, a father of nine little children..."

Cha Tiger was shocked. Nanzi looked absolutely terrible, God knows he was dying.

"Cha Tiger, you're strong. Could you put me on your back and take me to Shon Arei, I can barely walk," Nanzi pleaded. Cha Tiger took pity on the spider and agreed to do this favor. Nanzi climbed on the tiger's back, letting his body fall down and grabbing on to Cha Tiger's neck. "Would you mind putting a rope in your mouth so I can hold on? That way I can sit up straight," Nanzi asked. Cha Tiger growled in reluctance but said OK. And so they made their way to Shon Arei.

Once they started traveling

through the mondi, Nanzi turned to Cha Tiger and said: "These mosquitos are so annoying! Cha Tiger, do you mind if I cut a piece of

branch so I can keep these mosquitos away?" Cha Tiger let him take his branch. Eventually they made it out the mondi to where everyone else was. Nanzi immediately perked up and whacked Cha Tiger with his branch, making the tiger jump. He ran all the way to Shon Arei's castle. Exhausted, he plumped down in front of His Majesty.

"See, Shon Arei? Cha Tiger ain't nothing but a big donkey!" Nanzi said proudly. Everyone around cheered: "Hurray, Nanzi!" Poor Cha Tiger was so embarrassed that he was fooled by the conniving spider, and so he ran into the mondi to hide. To this day, it's said that the tiger still hides away in the mondi.

Cha: Nickname placed in front of someone's name and can mean anything, like friend. However, it often has negative connotations first.

Mondi: dry wooded areas found on the ABC islands.

Shon Arei: The King

Shi Maria: Nanzi's wife.

Story and pictures are from "Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)" by Nilda Pinto.





CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 39 Used up

1 Foolhardy 40 Sibilant

5 Spheres summons

9 Manner of speaking

11 Seasonal songs

13 Sudden swell

14 Apartment sign

15 Building wing

16 Unpopular mailer

18 Blocks

20 Future embryos

21 Emergency sound

22 Was aware

23 Silent assent

24 Track act

25 Crescent's tip

27 Attire

29 Wee worker

30 Diner fixture

32 Give the oath of office to

34 Copying

35 Vestige

36 Occupied

38 "— alive!"

DOWN

1 Gets up

2 Prom chaper-

ones, usually

3 Chop-house

choices

4 Glutton

5 Available

6 Hotel offering

7 June race

8 Jacket part

10 Dis-

ordered

12 Sipping

aid

17 Groan

inducer

19 Stage

item

22 Cutting

30 Family

symbol

31 Diatribes

33 Good

pair

37 Clerk

on "The Simpsons"



AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-16

CRYPTOQUOTE

D P Z A , I R O T Y V O M R C A

L Z D D T C B V P Z J R J O A R J P Z C E

M R Q S P D S M J R C E F M T C B

D S M J M . — F R J F R J R F Z A S

Cryptoquote: WINTER IS ON MY HEAD, BUT ETERNAL SPRING IS IN MY HEART. — VICTOR HUGO

Cruise ship Schedule: February 11 - 18 2025

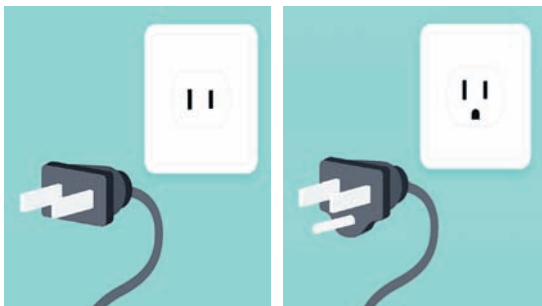
			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	11	CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
WED	12	SEA CLOUD SPIRIT	08.00	14.00	G	1
		GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
THU	13	SEVEN SEAS NAVIGATOR	07.00	17.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN JADE	07.00	20.00	C	1
		MARELLA DISCOVERY	08.00	20.00	I	1
SAT	15	MAJESTIC PRINCESS	07.00	16.00	B	1
		AIDAPERLA	08.00	18.00	C	1
		STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	I	1
MON	17	RESILIENT LADY	09.00	23.59	C	1
TUE	18	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	23.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN VIVA	13.00	21.00	I	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.





# Martyrs? Bacchanalia? Chaucer? Delving into the murky origins of Valentine's Day

By ALBERT STUMM  
Associated Press

Bearing cards, flowers, chocolates and poetry, lovers have always swooned on Valentine's Day as cherubs circled overhead. Right?

Or is the history darker, marked by Roman bacchanalia, martyrs and lies? Innumerable legends claim to explain the origins of Valentine's Day, but as is the case with legends, they leave many questions unanswered. Here are a few:

## Where did Valentine's Day originate?

For years, the consensus among historians was that the holiday had something to do with an ancient Roman festival called Lupercalia that fell in mid-February. Noel Lenski, a Yale University historian, pointed to the seasonal and thematic connections between Lupercalia and modern Valentine's Day.

Both are erotic festivals, in a sense, but the ancient one which included pairing off women and men by lottery also involved religious purification and atonement.

"Naked young men, drunk, would go running around Palatine Hill swatting virgin women with strips of dog fur and goat fur to make them fertile," Lenski said. According to one legend, Pope Gelasius wanted to put an end to the debauchery in the late fifth century. He declared Feb. 14 as the feast day of a St. Valentine, who had been martyred about 200 years before.

But that theory emerged in an 1807 book without any evidence to support the connection, said Elizabeth White Nelson, a University of Nevada Las Vegas history professor.

"People who think that's the story haven't read the letter that he actually wrote about Lupercalia," she said, referring to the pope. "Is he pissed off about Lupercalia? Yeah. But does it have anything to do with St. Valentine?"



(Associated Press Illustration / Peter Hamlin)

It's very, very hard to find any actual writing that says that."

## Was St. Valentine a real person?

The most cited legend is about a priest named Valentine who was executed in third-century Rome for marrying couples against the will of the pagan Emperor Claudius II. (He also is said to have cured the blindness of his jailer's daughter.) Another St. Valentine, the bishop of Terni, was martyred around the same time, but little is known about him.

A couple centuries later, a

prominent family named Valentine may have promoted themselves by exaggerating an ancestor's story after Christianity had become the prevailing religion, Lenski said.

"They say, 'Oh, by the way, we have this famous ancestor who was a bishop, and he had been persecuted by the emperor for sanctifying marriages,'" he said.

The story prevailed, but the lack of evidence prompted the Catholic Church in 1969 to remove St. Valentine as the primary saint celebrated on Feb.

14. Now, it's officially the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the missionary brothers who spread the Cyrillic alphabet to Eastern Europe. □



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# Movie Review: Marvel treads water with 'Captain America: Brave New World'

By **MARK KENNEDY**  
AP Entertainment Writer

Celebrate Valentine's Day this year with "Captain America: Brave New World," a highly processed, empty calorie, regret-later candy of a movie.

We're nearing the end of Phase Five of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with predictable and underwhelming returns. "Captain America: Brave New World" feels like it's just treading water, wasting Anthony Mackie in his first cinematic outing as his "Hamlet"-like Captain America.

The story by Rob Edwards, Malcolm Spellman and Darian Musson gathers familiar Marvel characters and blends them into a White House conspiracy-meets-international violent face-off in the Indian Ocean. Only Marvel in Phase Five could make that boring. It lifts from "The Manchurian Candidate" and "Top Gun" and even pointlessly steals its title from Aldous Huxley. It cannibalizes from other Marvel movies, like the addition of a substance called Adamantium, much like Vibranium from Wakanda. There is a Kendrick Lamar song heard at the



This image released by Disney shows Anthony Mackie in a scene from Marvel Studios' "Captain America: Brave New World."

climactic end, but it's not new; it's from 2014. We start with Harrison Ford as Thaddeus "Thunderbolt" Ross taking the role over from the late William Hurt in his first days as U.S. president. He insists he's changed from the days when he hunted down Hulk and was an all-around evil dude.

He approaches Sam Wilson,

the new Captain America, and proposes a strategic union between the government and Captain America. "Work with me, Sam. We'll show the world a better way forward."

This is a dangerous idea superheroes working for the government and Cap is warned but still agrees. "Trust me. My eyes are wide open," he reassures Dan-

ny Ramirez as his sidekick and fledgling new Falcon. (Cap's eyes may be open but yours may be slowly closing).

There is a trio of bad guys, each more powerful and overacting as the last a delicious Giancarlo Esposito as the villain Sidewinder, Tim Blake Nelson as Samuel Sterns (a hyper-intelligent megalomaniac with his

brain literally bursting out of his skull) and Red Hulk, a massive slab of angry man-meat who makes the regular Hulk look like Timothée Chalamet.

There are also some tangential characters, like Isaiah Bradley, a Korean War veteran who was a Super Soldier but spent years in prison, and the weirdly cast Shira Haas as Ruth Bat-Seraph, a slippery national security agent with a murky agenda.

Director Julius Onah does well with the action but fumbles the quieter moments and supervises editing that's the opposite of crisp, not helped by script writers who ape military language "Negative, the package is the priority" and grandiose sentiment "The country is lost."

For extra credit, spot all the product placements in the movie: Cap drives a GMC truck and uses Dell computers. The president of the United States uses a Peloton. What a wasted opportunity for Cap'n Crunch.

There does emerge a theme that unites Cap and Ross, which is that both feel the need to prove themselves. □

# It's a publishing fairy tale. 'Hansel and Gretel' is reimaged by Stephen King and Maurice Sendak

By **HILLEL ITALIE**  
AP National Writer

An upcoming edition of "Hansel and Gretel" combines the dark and singular talents of two literary giants who apparently never met: Stephen King and the late Maurice Sendak.

HarperCollins Publishers announced Thursday that the King-Sendak re-imagining of the famed Brothers Grimm tale about two lost children in a frightening forest is scheduled for Sept. 2. King's words will be complemented by sketches Sendak drew up for set and costume designs for a 1997 production of the Humpdink opera adaptation. The book was initiated by the Maurice Sendak Foundation. King, author of "The

Shining," "Carrie" and other horror classics, said he decided to agree to the project after seeing Sen-

dak's illustrations.

"Two of his pictures in particular spoke to me: One was of the wicked witch



Children's book author Maurice Sendak appears at his home in Ridgefield, Conn., on Sept. 6 2011, left, and author Stephen King appears at the premiere of "The Life of Chuck" during the Toronto International Film Festival on Sept. 6, 2024.

Associated Press

on her broom with a bag of kidnapped children riding behind her; the other was of the infamous candy house becoming a terrible face. I thought, 'This is what the house really looks like, a devil sick with sin, and it only shows that face when the kids turn their backs. I wanted to write that!'" King said in a statement issued through HarperCollins.

"To me, it was the essence of this story and, really, all fairy tales: a sunny exterior, a dark and terrible center, brave and resourceful children. In a way, I have been writing about kids like Hansel and Gretel for much of my life."

Representatives for King say he has no memory of meeting Sendak, although

King has expressed admiration for the musical "Really Rosie," a Sendak-Carole King collaboration.

Lynn Caponera, the Sendak foundation's executive director, said in a statement that she thought King ideal because outside of the Grimms, "he's the master of scary stories and a wonderful writer to boot." Sendak, who died in 2012, spoke about Hansel and Gretel around the time he was working on the opera. In an interview published in the 2003 book "The Art of Maurice Sendak" he called the fairy tale "the most profound" of the Grimm canon.

"Generally speaking, most of Grimm is about heroic children. □



# It's a 6-pack of All-Star rookies: Wembanyama, Herro, Williams, Sengun, Mobley and Cunningham

By TIM REYNOLDS  
AP Basketball Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Victor Wembanyama went to All-Star weekend in Indianapolis last year as one of the featured attractions. The San Antonio star was at the league's Tech Summit, plus played in the Rising Stars event and was a participant in the Skills Challenge.

He left all that with a clear goal.

"Next year, hopefully, the big game," Wembanyama said.

Next year is here. The big game or games, perhaps await.

Wembanyama, to no one's surprise, is a first-time All-Star who'll compete in the NBA's new All-Star mini-tournament on Sunday in San Francisco. He'll have these seven players for teammates: Denver's Nikola Jokic, Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, Indiana's Pascal Siakam, New York's Karl-Anthony Towns, Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell, Atlanta's Trae Young and another first-timer Houston's Alperen



San Antonio Spurs center Victor Wembanyama reacts during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Washington Wizards, Monday, Feb. 10, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

Sengun.

Wembanyama's selection almost seemed like a formality. The league's reigning rookie of the year is already a global name; the NBA says Wembanyama content on social media is among the most viewed of all players and his jersey ranks No. 5 on the league's worldwide sales list.

"I've been talking to a few people about a moment he had when he was in New York," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "He played the Knicks on Christmas Day and then he played the Brooklyn Nets a few days later, so he spent some time in New York, and Victor, who plays chess, went down to

a famous park in New York City, Washington Square Park, and brought his chess board and just began playing a few games, and within a few days, something like 100 million people had seen that on social media. "So, it just speaks to the popularity of Victor and the dramatic interest we're seeing in players' lifestyles

and their interests and everything they enjoy doing. That was remarkable."

There are six All-Star rookies in this year's event: Wembanyama, Sengun, Miami's Tyler Herro, Cleveland's Evan Mobley, Detroit's Cade Cunningham and Oklahoma City's Jalen Williams. Of that group, Wembanyama is the youngest (just turned 21), the tallest (officially 7-foot-3) and will surely be the one with the most eyeballs on him in San Francisco this weekend.

"I think that was one of the most active days that we've had in our group chat since the summer when Vic made the All-Star Game," Spurs forward Harrison Barnes said. "I think it was really just a testament to the person that he is. Obviously, he works extremely hard. He gets so much attention, and he always tries to put it back on the team, make it more about the team and less about him." Of the six All-Star rookies, Herro is the oldest and the one who's been in the NBA the longest. He's averaging 23.5 points this season. □

## Heat President Pat Riley reveals where his 'three-peat' trademark revenues wind up

By TIM REYNOLDS  
AP Basketball Writer

Pat Riley's three-peat trademarks could have led to the Miami Heat president getting a sizable payday if the Kansas City Chiefs had won their third consecutive Super Bowl. Turns out, the Basketball Hall of Famer actually doesn't keep that money. Riley said he devotes his share of revenues gleaned from "three-peat" usage he's had trademarks on that term for about 35 years to various charitable organizations. Of particular importance to Riley and his wife, Chris Riley, are groups that help military veterans and their families, including the Special Operations Warrior Foundation in Tampa, Florida. Riley has said the dona-

tions he and the Heat make to veterans' groups are "very minor in comparison to what they deserve." "These are very patriotic, brave and proud people," Riley said Wednesday. "What they do in serving our country to keep us safe is one of the most courageous sacrifices an American can offer."

Riley and the Heat created what the team has called the "HomeStrong" initiative 20 years ago, and the team has routinely welcomed returning soldiers and first responders to Miami games over those two decades, plus further honor them with an on-court pregame ceremony. Riley also took the team's training camp in 2010 to military bases in northwest Florida. The Special Operations

Warrior Foundation which has received \$200,000 in recent years from Riley and his wife, plus another \$100,000 that a Heat donor earmarked to the charity of Riley's choice honors fallen soldiers and Medal of Honor recipients with grants for education as part of what it calls a "cradle to career" plan that backs the children of those soldiers from preschool through college.

It also provides financial grants to severely combat-wounded, ill, and injured Special Operations soldiers in need of medical care. Riley has owned multiple "three-peat" trademarks since beginning to file for them in the late 1980s, when the Los Angeles Lakers who he was coaching at that time were seeking

three consecutive NBA titles.

Riley struck a deal with the Chiefs on three-peat usage, just in case Kan-

sas City had won its third straight Super Bowl. The Chiefs lost to Philadelphia 40-22 on Sunday, ending the three-peat bid. □



Miami Heat president Pat Riley, left, chats with Col. Michael T. Plehn as they watch Heat players during NBA basketball training camp, Tuesday, Sept. 28, 2010 in Hurlburt Field, Fla.

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## Jets announce they've told Aaron Rodgers they're moving forward without him

**By DENNIS WASZAK Jr.**  
**AP Pro Football Writer**  
Aaron Rodgers' disappointing two-year stint with the New York Jets is over. And the team's only Super Bowl trophy is still standing by itself.

The Jets announced Thursday they told the 41-year-old quarterback they are moving on without him next season.

While Rodgers hasn't said whether he intends to continue playing for a 21st NFL season, the Jets with new general manager Darren Mougey and coach Aaron Glenn in charge have officially ruled out a return to New York.

In a joint statement issued by the team, Mougey and Glenn said they met with Rodgers last week and informed him "that our intention was to move in a different direction at quarterback."

"It was important to have

this discussion now to provide clarity and enable each of us the proper time to plan for our respective futures," Mougey and

Glenn said in the statement. "We want to thank him for the leadership, passion, and dedication he brought to the organization

and wish him success moving forward."

The four-time MVP, who's the fifth player in NFL history to throw 500 touchdown

passes in the regular season, has one year left on his contract, worth a non-guaranteed \$37.5 million.

New York would absorb a \$49 million dead money charge next season unless it designates Rodgers a post-June 1 cut and can spread out that charge over two years. If the Jets do that, Rodgers would remain on their roster while carrying a \$23.5 salary cap charge until the start of the NFL's new league year on March 12.

In April 2023, Rodgers was traded to the Jets after 18 seasons with the Green Bay Packers looking to help the franchise end a Super Bowl drought that dates to the glory days of Joe Namath and the 1968 season.

At his introductory news conference, Rodgers noted how the franchise's only Vince Lombardi Trophy looked "lonely" in the team's lobby. □



New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers (8) stands with teammates before an NFL football game against the Miami Dolphins, Jan. 5, 2025, in East Rutherford, N.J.

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